



Cameron County Emergency Services District No. 1

Board of Emergency Services Commissioners Meeting Notice

Wednesday, February 28, 2024 – 1:30 P.M. Regular Meeting

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE BOARD OF EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSIONERS OF THE CAMERON COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES DISTRICT NO. 1 (CCESD) WILL BE HELD AT EOC MEETING ROOM LOCATED ON THE 2ND FLOOR, 964 E. HARRISON STREET, IN BROWNSVILLE, TEXAS, AT 1:30 P.M. ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2024.

Quorum: Oscar Tapia, Eduardo Alvarez, Rene Perez, Beverly Meyn, Calixto Suarez (ABSENT)

Attendance: Arroyo City Fire Chief Jon Whelan, STEC Director Bill Aston, CCECD Alma Linda Chavez, CCECD Joel Davila, Port Isabel Fire Marshal John Sandoval, Rio Hondo Fire Chief William Bilokury, Santa Rosa Rene Garcia, San Benito Fire Chief Efrain Bautista, CCDFM Juan Ramos, CCDFM Santiago Ramos, Los Fresnos Fire Chief Gene Daniels, P.I EMS Director Charlie Wood, SPI EMS LT. Emilio Hinojosa, SPI Fire Chief Jim Pigg, Brownsville Fire Chief Jarret Sheldon, BFD Gabriel Garza, Rick Najera, City of Brownsville City Manager Helen Ramirez, City of Brownsville Alan Guard, CC Civil Counsel Myles Garza

Staff: Grecia Lucio –ESD Coordinator, ESD Consultant – Tom Hushen

Legal: Daniel N. Lopez, Dylbia Vega

MINUTES

1. Swearing-in Ceremony for CCESD Board Members.

Rene Perez (2) years

Beverly Meyn (1) year

Calixto Suarez (1) year

Swear-in Ceremony was conducted by Mrs. Grecia Lucio CCESD Coordinator and Public Notary for the State of Texas for the re-appointment of Mr. Rene Perez and Mrs. Beverly Meyn at 1:31 p.m. Mr. Calixto Suarez was absent.

2. Call Meeting to Order.

A. Quorum

B. Pledges of Allegiance – United States of America and Texas

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Oscar Tapia at 1:34 p.m.

Quorum was established by four members present.

Mr. Eduardo Alvarez entered the meeting at 1:34 p.m.

3. Public Comments (**Each individual has up to three minutes. Board members will not engage in any discussion**).

No Public Comments.

4. Discussion and possible action on the election of the CCESD Board Officers.

A. President

B. Vice President

C. Secretary

D. Treasurer

E. Assistant Treasurer

Motion to approve the election of the CCESD Board Officers made by Mr. Eduardo Alvarez; Oscar Tapia Board Presidents, Eduardo Alvarez -Vice President, Beverly Meyn – Secretary, Rene Perez – Treasurer, Calixto Suarez Assistant Treasurer. Motion seconded by Mr. Rene Perez. Motion carried unanimously by the board members.

5. Consideration and Approval of an insurance bond in the amount of \$500,000 set by the County Judge for the Treasurer of the Emergency Services District No. 1.

Motion to approve the bond in the amount of \$500,000 set by the County Judge for the CCESD Treasurer of the CCESD made by Mr. Alvarez seconded by Mrs. Meyn.

Motion carried unanimously by the board members present.

6. Approval of Minutes:

A. January 24, 2024 Special Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve January 24, 2024 Special Meeting minutes made by Mr. Perez, seconded by Mr. Alvarez. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Financial Report:

A. Presentation of Bank Statement (Revenues)

B. Presentation of Payment of Claims

Presentation of bank statement, revenues and payment of claims made by Mrs. Lucio,

As of January 1st, 2024 the beginning balance was of \$4,078,036.41, a total of 21 deposit/ credits in the amount of \$380,891.76, a total of 19 check/debit in the amount of \$385,273.50, total interest incurred for the month in the amount of \$6,902.34. Ending balance as of January 31, 2024 was in the amount of \$4,080,557.01. The reconciliation for the month was complete.

Total revenue for the month of January 2024 was in the amount of \$361,825.91.

January marked the beginning of the second quarter for the fiscal year.

Payment of Claims expenses under line-item supplies and equipment in the amount of \$171.17 for office supplies from Office Depot, and a second expense for USPS \$10.51 for mailing checks.

Administrative, legal, webmaster and operational contracts first quarter checks were disbursed in the month of January.

Motion made to approve financial reports A., and B., made by Mr. Perez, seconded by Mrs. Meyn.

Motion carried.

8. Presentation of Action Reports:

A. Coordinator's Report- Monthly Summary Report

B. Emergency Services Consultant's – Emergency Management Assessment Report

C. Fire Marshal Updates

D. Presentation by Fire Chief Jarrett Sheldon for the City of Brownsville.

Coordinators report was presented by Mrs. Grecia Lucio.

Mrs. Lucio stated that Fire Marshal Santiago Ramos and herself met with Santa Rosa Fire Chief to answer any questions or concerns they may have had. The City of Santa Rosa is up date on reporting for fiscal year. Mrs. Lucio also stated that both fire and EMS providers have been up to date with reporting and have encountered no delays or issues.

Mrs. Lucio also reported that Mr. Hushen had previously received and cashed his meal per-diem check in the amount of \$112.50 for the 2024 SAFE-D conference but was unable to attend due to the passing of his mother. Last minute changes were made to the hotel and conference registration so that Mr. Juan Sebastian Gonzalez Deputy EMC attended in Mr. Hushen's place. Since said meal per-diem check had already been cashed, Mr. Hushen hand delivered the amount of \$112.50 in currency to Mr. Juan Sebastian Gonzalez. Lastly, Mrs. Lucio reported that Mr. Alvarez was unable to attend the conference himself and that Mr. Alvarez had brought back his meal per-diem in currency for the amount of \$112.50.

Said amount was going to be deposited onto the CCESD No.1 bank account and would be reflected on next month bank statement. End of report.

Emergency Services Consultant report was presented by Mr. Hushen.

Mr. Hushen advised the board that prior to commencement of the ESD meeting the Fire Chiefs meeting was conducted at the EOC. Mr. Hushen advised that during said meeting they discussed the mutual aid agreement that was created and dated back 2004 and was provided to all chiefs for a better understanding of the mutual aid agreement. Secondly, he reported and proposed the purchase of a portable cascade system that would serve as a regional asset. Mr. Hushen described the portable cascade system and its function. The cascade system is a portable system that has ability to refill air apparatus should provider be in the middle of nowhere. Mr. Hushen stated that a regular price system is priced slightly over \$100k and the opportunity to purchase this one system from the university for the amount of \$50k. Mr. Hushen advised that no current action is required from the board, just a proposal and that it was just something to consider.

Fire Marshal Updates was conducted by Mr. Thomas Hushen.

Mr. Hushen reported on a mutual aid fire to Brownsville fir the Port of Brownsville warehouse fire. Also stated that the County Fire Marshal will stop by the county providers fire department to conduct a formal inspection and to make sure everyone is up to date.

City of Brownsville report was presented by Brownsville Fire Chief Jarret Sheldon.

Mr. Sheldon addressed the board and discussed about the financial challenges the city of Brownsville is facing due to ongoing industrial infrastructure development in the Port of Brownsville, Space X and now 2- LNG companies. Chief Sheldon briefed on the current capabilities that the Brownville Fire Department provides such as structure firefighting, emergency medical services, non-emergency medical transfers, hazardous materials, response mitigation, dive flood water rescue, high and low angle rescue, confined space rescue, trench rescue, wildland firefighting, community paramedicine, aircraft rescue firefighting, and a deployable state resource.

Chief Sheldon went on to describing Brownsville's industrial growth and the Port of Brownsville principal commodities. One LNG facility will occupy 900 acres within the port within the next 5 years. A second LNG will be adjacent to the Rio Grande LNG and would occupy 625 acres. Space X sits outside the city limits of Brownsville but nonetheless falls under the BFD coverage response area. Space X has limited on-site EMS capabilities. Chief Sheldon went on to explaining should any incident involve multiple patients BFD will be required to respond. Industrial truck transportation to the Port of Brownsville and from Mexico utilizing one of three border crossing in Brownsville and active railroad lines inside the port.

Chief Sheldon described the response of BFD on four different fire incidents from 2021-2023 totaling the amount of \$227,731.00 an averaging of about \$56K per fire response for man hours, foam, equipment and more. Chief Sheldon also stated that those were just four incidents within the port, but that there had already been profusely more fires which were not included onto said presentation. Said expenditures only reflect expenses by the city of Brownsville. Chief Sheldon stated that said expenses incurred by mutual aid or by other fire providers is not information that he had or is aware of.

Chief Sheldon briefed on the city's 2022 Comprehensive Analysis that was conducted specifically for the port of Brownsville in reference to equipment apparatus acquisitions to handle significant fires at the port area and explained the needs of specialized fire technical response equipment and training. He then explained that the City of Brownsville had initiated the process to purchase engine 8 which was over \$1.1 million dollars. He then stated that said purchase was at the cities expense. Engine 8 will be utilized specifically to fight fires well within the Port of Brownsville and all new industrial infrastructure within the county and the BFD response area. Additionally, the need to purchase a specialized fire truck and a ladder truck averaging an expense of \$5 million to the city for all 3 apparatus.

Chief Sheldon introduced Mrs. Helen Ramirez- Brownsville City Manager. Mr. Ramirez introduced herself and addressed the board and everyone present. Mrs. Ramirez stated the financial concerns for the

city of Brownsville to include the purchase of equipment such as engine 8 which was purchased on or about a year ago to help mitigate the now potential hazards and fires in the existing industrial infrastructures within the county and the BFD response areas. She stated the number one priority is the life and safety of Brownsville constituents, those in the Port of Brownsville and all industrial industries. Mrs. Ramirez mentioned that in order to properly do so they had to purchase equipment. She briefed that the purchase of the equipment had been done prior to having the funding available and stated the concerns that the Brownsville tax payers are subsidizing the safety of the region. Mrs. Ramirez went on to saying that there should be a more equitable distribution of monetary resources and how paramount it is to find a way. She informed how the city has to bond in order to purchase heavy equipment and stated how they are currently subsidizing the \$2 million for the purchase of equipment. She stated how unsustainable it is for the city. As she addressed everyone present, she mentioned mutual aid and how fire departments had to utilize their equipment, man power, foam and additional resources to help mitigate fires based on each scene and addressed what the expense were to each provider. Mrs. Ramirez proposed a more proactive resolution to remediate some of the concerns.

Chief Sheldon proposed specialize training to effectively and safely respond to emergency and recommended a minimum of \$50k added annually and continue to rollover.

A second proposal to create a Port/Industrial fund with an agreed minimum amount that is fair and reasonable, to be billed for real cost by responding agencies to the Port Industrial zone to include Space X, LNG's, Port Warehouses and Trucks. Mrs. Ramirez stated that the proposed fund account would be created so that all responding agencies will get reimbursed for services provided and not to make money off anyone.

Chief Sheldon then proposed that any surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year to roll into the proposed Port Industrial Fund account for future port response reimbursements. Chief Sheldon was open to questions.

Mrs. Meyn addressed Chief Sheldon and asked if Brownsville had addressed all firefighting concerns with those industrial entities entering the county. Chief Sheldon responded by stating that Space X had initially purchased a fire truck but refrained from any fire services or the creation of a fire department and adhered to only providing EMS services. He then stated that the last conversation with LNG was that they would purchase small equipment- foam truck and a tank truck but that they would not have a dedicated fire department. The Port of Brownsville owns the port but they rely on outside fire services. Mrs. Meyn asked if there was a way to hold the Port of Brownsville accountable. Chief Sheldon stated that Brownsville fire was going to approach the port directly. Mrs. Ramirez then stated that together as whole, meaning all providers to come together and address those entities together. Mrs. Ramirez stated that regardless if the port would want to create their own fire department the equipment would still take an average of two year to arrive. Therefore, the big question is what happens now, today or tomorrow, proposing the Port Industrial Fund for the now expenses and reimbursement by each responding agency. Mrs. Meyn then asked, what entity will financially fund that proposed Port Industrial Fund. Mrs. Ramirez responded that said funds could possibly come from those industrial entities and any additional surplus funds at the end of the CCESD fiscal year due to the increase of more construction, more business and all infrastructures meaning more collected property taxes.

Chief Bautista from the city of San Benito then asked Mrs. Ramirez, what exactly is the city of Brownsville asking for. Mrs. Ramirez responded by saying a Port Industrial Fund, a \$50k fund for specialized training, that surplus funds over what was currently projected to be added to the Port Industrial Fund for the following years for reimbursements by responding agencies, and requesting from these industrial entities to add monies into said account so that all fire responding agencies are able to get reimbursed.

Los Fresnos Chief Gene Daniel enters the conversation and utilizes the port commercial warehouse fire as an example and stated that BFD could file a claim through the insurance for potential reimbursement relief for the expenses incurred. He then stated the specialized training is an excellent idea and proposed

that the ESD form a committee that could be equitable for everyone and that he would like to be part of that committee.

Mr. Tapia explains the existing ESD budget how the taxes are collected and how the ESD is capped at a tax collection rate in order to not enter an election. He goes on to saying, the money that is collected is to pay for administrative and contractual expenses and the rest is divided into a 60/40 split. 60% goes directly to fire service providers and the other 40% goes to EMS providers. Leaving all monies distributed at the end of the fiscal year. Mrs. Ramirez stated that said proposed Port Industrial Fund will be based on excess collected funds and by no means taking any funds from anyone.

Mr. Alvarez asked Mrs. Ramirez if said port fund proposal has been discussed and addressed to those industrial entities. Mrs. Ramirez responded by saying no, and stated how the city wanted to discuss this with the ESD and for all to come together and propose to the port what the current real-life situation is so that those industrial entities can potentially add additional funds to the proposed port fund.

Arroyo City Fire Chief John Wheelan then asked where would the \$50k training monies come from. He stated on the issue that Arroyo city to include Rio Hondo and San Benito also have the cargo truck load issues and how the city Harlingen also has an developing port. Thomas Hushen ESD Consultant responded that everyone come together to request said funding from those industrial entities such as Space X, the port and the LNG's. Mr. Hushen then stated that if said Port Industrial Fund becomes available, the city of Harlingen too has a port of entry and all those surrounding agencies can have access to the proposed Port Industrial Fund for agency reimbursement.

Rio Hondo Fire Chief William Bilokury addresses everyone and stated that the county should reach out to said industrial entities and request additional funding through them.

Thomas Hushen then makes a suggestion for all Cameron County Fire Chiefs to advocate and go speak to those industrial entities and explain the situation and ask for their help and the potential of adding additional funds to the proposed Port Industrial Fund.

Mrs. Ramirez stated that the proposed Industrial Port Fund is open for all responding agencies and that it is not only for the Port of Brownsville but both ports in Cameron County.

Mr. Tapia addresses Mrs. Ramirez and thanks her and Chief Sheldon for their presentation.

Mrs. Ramirez responded by thanking the board and everyone for the opportunity to come and speak and for the transparency. She then stated on the importance to work together collaboratively.

End of presentation by the City of Brownsville.

9. Consideration and acceptance of the Annexation Letters from the City of Brownsville.
Motion to reject the annexation by the City of Brownsville made by Mrs. Meyn seconded by Mr. Alvarez. Motion carried unanimously.
10. Discussion and attendee feedback on the 2024 SAFE-D Conference.
President Oscar Tapia briefed the board on those present on attending the 2024 SAFE-D Conference and sated that there were over two thousand attendees at this year conference, informed of annexation issues, and strategic planning.
11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS:**
 - A. Confer with Cameron County Emergency Services District Board Legal Counsel regarding legal issues with Service Contracts, pursuant to V.T.C.A., Government Code Section 551.071 (2).
The CCESD Board entered Executive Session at 2:39 p.m. motion made by Mr. Perez, seconded by Mrs. Meyn.
The CCESD Board closed Executive Session at 3:18 p.m., motion made by Mr. Perez, seconded by Mrs. Meyn.
12. Action Relative to the Executive Session.
 - A. Possible Action
Motion to acknowledge the reports and to proceed as discussed made by Mr. Perez, and seconded by Mrs. Meyn.

Motion carried by board members present.

13. Adjournment.

Motion to adjourn made by Mr. Perez seconded by Mr. Alvarez @3:20 p.m.

Signed and posted on this ____ day of _____, 2024, at ___ a.m. /p.m., in Brownsville, Texas.

Oscar Tapia, Board President
Cameron County Emergency Services District No. 1